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AUTHOR Dake, Bruce; And Others
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ABSTRACT

California special education teachers (N=1,282) responded to a survey concerning the distribution of, and support for, students receiving special education services who engage in severe problem behaviors in school settings. The survey included questions about the status and experience of the teacher as well as the specific areas of support used in the classroom and student placement classification. Tables and text detail responses concerning: (1) information about the teachers; (2) numbers of students with severe challenging behaviors; (3) classroom structure and support available to teachers with students having severe behavior problems; (4) adequacy of resources and procedures; (5) effectiveness of technologies and resources; (6) teacher satisfaction with preservice training; (7) record keeping of occurrences of severe behavior problems; (8) evaluation of the effectiveness of strategies used; (9) functional analyses; (10) recommendations for enrollment in more restrictive educational programs; (11) allocation of additional resources; (12) use and effectiveness of antecedent and consequent behavioral interventions; and (13) teacher recommendations for improving support for students with severe challenging behaviors. The most common recommendations were for inservice workshops, consultant support, and work with family and others involved with the student. (DB)

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ED 372 551

A Statewide Survey of California Teachers About Behavioral Interventions in Special Education

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Bruce Dake, Douglas Fisher and Ian Pumpian
San Diego State University

Thomas Haring and Catherine Breen
University of California, Santa Barbara

On September 17, 1990, the Legislature of the State of California passed Assembly Bill (AB) 2586, also known as the Hughes Act. Part of this legislation declared that a statewide study be conducted of the use of behavioral interventions with California individuals with exceptional needs receiving special education and related services in order to guide the formation of regulations and teacher training efforts for individuals with special needs receiving special education. The scope of the study was developed by the State Department of Education, in consultation with the Advisory Commission on Special Education and other groups representing parents, teachers, administrators and advocates. Two studies were developed, one for teachers and the other for administrators. The surveys were designed to identify current practices and opinions regarding future training needs for supporting students with challenging behavior. This paper presents the results collected from the California teachers of special education, and is intended to summarize the raw survey data collected. The results from the survey of administrators has been completed, and is available from the California Department of Education. Implications and training recommendations from both studies are presented elsewhere (Dake, Fisher & Pumpian, in preparation).

Methods

Participants

1,282 special education teachers and 255 special education administrators in California participated in the study, during the 1991-1992 and 1992-1993 school years. Participants were selected from a master list of County and District Offices of Education provided by the California State Department of Education. This papers presents the results of the 1,282 teachers of special education programs in California.

The variables under consideration in the study related to the distribution of, and support for, students receiving special education services who engage in severe problem behaviors in school settings.

A student with severe behavior problems was defined as a student with mild, moderate, severe, or profound intellectual disabilities (e.g., Learning Handicapped, Mild/Moderately Handicapped, Severely Handicapped, S.E.D./Behavior Disorders, Profoundly/Multiply Handicapped) who exhibited one or more of the following behaviors:

1. *Self-Injury:* Behavior performed by the students that resulted in tissue damage to themselves (e.g., bruises, cuts, swelling, bleeding, etc.)
2. *Injury to others:* Behavior that resulted in tissue damage to other students or adults.
3. *Property damage:* The destruction of nontrivial property (e.g., clothing, windows, desks, walls).
4. *Disruption to instruction of self or others:* Other severe behavior problems that are pervasive and maladaptive that require a systematic and frequent application of behavioral interventions. The frequency and intensity of these behaviors prevent the student from benefiting from instruction and from participating in typical integrated settings.

Teacher survey. The questionnaire, developed by Haring and Breen, "Building Policy: A Statewide Survey Of California Teachers About Critical Issues Concerning Special Education," was

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completed by the participating teachers. The questionnaire consisted of 30 questions divided into two sections. The first section contained five questions about the status and experience of the teacher. The second section contained 25 questions addressing specific areas of support used in the classroom.

Student placement classification was assessed using the labeling categories conventional to the California Department of Education system:

1. *Regular Class* referred to placement in the same class as nondisabled students throughout the entire school day.
2. *Resource Room* placement involved a pull-out class in which the majority of the student's day was spent in a classroom designed to provide extra support in specific curricular areas. Part of each day was spent in either regular or self-contained classrooms.
3. *Self-Contained Classroom* referred to placement in a self-contained special education classroom in which the majority of the day was not spent with nondisabled students, and placement in the classroom was based on diagnostic labels associated with federal handicapping conditions.
4. *Community*
5. *Residential Facility*
6. *Home* referred to placement in the student's home with education provided by teachers going to the student's home.

Teachers were asked to respond to three questions regarding (a) the types of problem behaviors observed; (b) the type, amount, and adequacy of extra assistance received for the support of students with severe behavior problems; and (c) the type and frequency of integrated activities included in the program for students with severe problem behaviors. Teachers also responded to questions concerning the staffing structure of their classroom, the effectiveness of behavioral interventions used in routine and crisis intervention situations and the adequacy of available support systems. The questionnaire included forced choice, open-ended and Likert-type questions.

Procedures

Pilot survey. The Statewide Survey of California Teachers Questionnaire was field tested by 14 special education teachers. Each of the field test teachers were given a page containing instructions, a copy of the questionnaire (19 items) and space to provide feedback. The feedback form asked the teachers to evaluate the questionnaire in terms of its clarity (whether any of the questions appeared ambiguous or difficult to answer), and what other issues might be important to address within the questionnaire. The final form of the questionnaire reflected modifications based on responses from this field test.

Statewide Survey of California Teachers Questionnaire. Packets of questionnaires were sent to the administrators of each of the school districts in California that serve students in special education. The packets included a letter from the California Department of Education via the University of California, Santa Barbara, instructions to the administrator for the distribution of the questionnaires to teachers, and the questionnaires in envelopes for teachers. The questionnaires were distributed to the teachers with a cover letter and a self-addressed, stamped envelope for the return of the questionnaire to UC Santa Barbara. The administrators were given a telephone number to call if they had any questions, or if they needed more questionnaires. The questionnaires were coded by district, indicating a distinction between County Program and District Offices of Education. 3,746 surveys were mailed out by the State Department of Education.

Results

Information about the teachers. Administrators from all of the school districts cooperated in the study by seeing to the appropriate distribution of the packets of surveys to their teachers. Of the 3,746 questionnaires distributed, 1,282 were returned (34%). Although this response rate was lower than hoped, surveys were collected from each geographic area and are representative of all regions of the state.

Of these 1,282 questionnaires, 701 (55%) were completed by county program teachers and 544 (42%) were completed by teachers employed by district offices. 11 (1%) were completed by persons indicating a category of "other" (e.g., state diagnostic school) and 26 (2%) failed to report their employer. Eighty-two percent of the teachers who completed the survey were female (1,046). The 1,282 teachers had an average of 11 years of teaching experience, with a range of 1-36 years. 785 (61%) reported teaching in primary school settings while 221 (17%) were from secondary school settings. Most of the teachers surveyed had received their training to work with students with special needs an average of over four years ago (842 respondents, 66%). 162 respondents (13%) indicated that they had received their training less than one year ago. Table 1 indicates the age groupings of the participants.

Table 1: Age Grouping of Participants

Age Grouping	Number of Participants	Percentage
< 20 years	1	< 1
20-25 years	32	2.6
26-30 years	96	7.8
31-40 years	428	34.4
41-50 years	478	38.5
> 50 years	208	16.7
Total	1243	100.0

Table 2 contains a breakdown by type of instructional setting in which support was provided to students with disabilities. Teachers were allowed to select any combination of the settings that applied. This resulted in a total of 1,906 potential instructional settings in which the 1,282 responding teachers provided support. The results indicate that the majority of the 1,282 responding teachers continue to provide support in self-contained classrooms.

Table 2: Type of Instructional Settings

Instructional Setting	Number Responded	Percentage
Regular class	322	16.9
Resource room	133	7.0
Self-contained class	1124	59.0
Community	222	11.6
Residential facility	15	.7
Home	92	4.8

Teachers were asked to identify the number of students with disabilities served in each of the following categories of disability. Teachers were asked to put each student in only one disability category. Table 3 contains a breakdown of number of students with disabilities.

Table 3: Disability Categories of Students

Disability	Number of Students	Percentage
Learning Handicapped	6228	38.5
Mild/Moderately Handicapped	2106	13.0
Severely Handicapped	4252	26.3
S.E.D./Behavior Disorders	1512	9.4
Profoundly/Multiply Handicapped	2067	12.8
Total	16165	100.0

Finally, teachers were also asked to indicate what special education teaching certificates they held. Table 4 indicates the results of the 1,229 teachers that responded to this item:

Table 4: Types of Teaching Certificates Held by Participants

Type of Teaching Certificate	Number of Teachers	Percentage
Specialist Credential, Severely Handicapped	347	28.2
Specialist Credential, Learning Handicapped	353	28.7
Resource Certificate	160	13.0
Emergency Credential	152	12.4
Other	217	17.7
Total:	1,229	100.0

Students with severe challenging behavior. 868 teachers (68% of all responding teachers) reported having students with severe behavior problems. They reported a total of 4,093 students (25% of all students represented by the study) as engaging in one or more of the four classes of severe challenging behavior. Students ranged in age from birth to 23 years. Of the 4,093 students identified as engaging in severe problem behavior, several were reported to engage in more than one of the four classes of severe challenging behavior. Self-injury was reported in 927 cases (22.6%) with a mean of 2.1 students per reporting teacher; injury to others was reported in in 1,650 cases (40.3%) with a mean of 3.0 students per reporting teacher; 1,464 cases (35.8%) of repeated property destruction were reported (with a mean of 3.1 students per reporting teacher); and pervasive and maladaptive disruption to instruction was reported in 3,762 cases (91.9%) with a mean of 4.7 students per reporting teacher .

Classroom structure and support available to teachers with students with severe problem behaviors. Typically, a teacher and two teacher aides were available on a full-time basis. In addition, a 0.20 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) was allocated to the class from therapists, consultants, administrators, and "other" personnel.

Teachers were asked if they received "extra" support to respond to the needs of students with severe behavior problems. "Extra" support was defined as resources which are additional to the basic instructional unit [i.e., additional to the teacher, instructional assistant(s), and regularly assigned DIS staff] which are added to assist with students with severe behavior problems. Of those teachers who responded, 424 stated "no" and 423 indicated "yes." When teachers who responded affirmatively who serve students

with severe problem behaviors were asked to indicate the kind and amount of "extra" support they received from the school district, they identified access to increased teaching assistant time most frequently, with an average of 26 extra hours per week allocated. Several teachers also indicated that they received assistance from a specialist in behavioral support (5.7 hours per week average).

Adequacy of resources and procedures. Teachers were asked to assess the adequacy of support for students with severe problem behaviors by indicating their degree of agreement with the following statement, "The resources and procedures currently available are adequate to meet the needs of students with very difficult behavior problems." On a Likert Scale from one (agree) to 10 (disagree) the average reported rating was 6.5. Thus, it can be inferred that the majority of the teachers who responded did not believe that resources and procedures were adequate to support students with severe problem behaviors.

Effectiveness of technologies and resources. Teachers were asked to indicate how effective they felt the technologies and resources available to them are in working with students with severe behavior problems in the following contexts: Self-contained classroom, Mainstreamed classes, Nonstructured school contexts (e.g., recess, breaks, lunch, before and after school, waking from one class to the next) and Community. Teachers were asked to rate effectiveness on a Likert-type scale from 1 (not effective) to 10 (very effective) for the four settings. The mean ratings were as follows: 6.6 for self-contained classrooms; 5.1 for mainstreamed classrooms; 5.3 for nonstructured school contexts; and 5.7 for community settings. Results indicated that teachers perceived more effective resources and technologies available in self-contained classrooms, which may be due to the fact that they are only familiar with delivering special education services within this type of setting.

Teacher satisfaction with preservice training. Teachers were asked to assess the level to which university preservice training prepared them to support students with severe problem behaviors. Teachers were asked to circle a number on a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (not effective) to 10 (very effective) The overall average rating was 4.55. Teachers apparently do not feel that their university-based preservice training was effective in preparing them to work with students with severe problem behaviors.

Recording occurrences of severe behavior problem incidents. Teachers were asked how frequently they recorded the occurrence of severe behavior problems of their students. 828 teachers responded to this item. Teachers recorded occurrences based on the following rating descriptors: Never, Per incident, Daily, Biweekly, Weekly, Monthly, Yearly and As requested. Results are summarized in Table 5:

Table 5: Recording Frequency of Severe Behavior Problem Incidents

Recording Frequency	Number of Teachers	Percentage
Never	22	2.7
Per incident	385	46.5
Daily	228	27.5
Biweekly	9	1.1
Weekly	57	6.9
Monthly	12	1.4
Yearly	2	.2
As requested	113	13.6
Total	828	100.0

Evaluating effectiveness of strategies used. Teachers were also asked how frequently they evaluated the effectiveness of the strategies used to target the severe behavior problems of their students. 832 teachers responded to this item. Teachers were given the following rating descriptors: Never, Daily, Biweekly, Weekly, Monthly, Yearly and As requested. Results are summarized in Table 6:

Table 6: Evaluation Frequency of Strategy Effectiveness

Evaluation Frequency	Number of Teachers	Percentage
Never	18	2.2
Daily	372	44.7
Biweekly	53	6.4
Weekly	191	23.0
Monthly	95	11.4
Yearly	8	1.0
As requested	95	11.4
Total	832	100.0

Functional analyses. Teachers were asked to indicate if they had received training in conducting functional analyses of severe behavior problems. Functional analysis was defined in the survey as "developing a specific hypothesis, such as escaping tasks or gaining social attention, as the motivation for the problem behavior." 1255 teachers responded to this item. 466 respondents (37%) indicated that they had not, and 789 (63%) indicated that they had received training in functional analyses. Of those teachers who responded affirmatively 420 (53%) indicated that they had received their training as a part of their university credential training and 359 (46%) indicated that they had received their training through inservice presentations.

Teachers were then asked whether they actually used functional analyses in working with students with severe behavior problems. 1,207 teachers responded, with 435 teachers (36%) indicating that they did not use functional analyses and 772 (64%) indicating that they did use the technique.

Recommendations for enrollment in more restrictive educational programs.

Teachers were asked to indicate whether, in their role as a teacher, they had ever recommended because of behavior that a student be enrolled in a more restrictive educational program other than their classroom program. 1,221 teachers responded to this item. Of these teachers, 518 (42%) indicated "no," they had not made the recommendation, and 703 (58%) indicated that "yes," they had. Those teachers responding affirmatively were then asked to indicate the number of students for whom they had made this recommendation in the past five years. The average number of students reported to have been recommended for more restrictive educational programs was 2.62, with a range of 1 to 25.

Allocation of additional resources. Question 25 asked teachers, "If additional resources were available, targeted for issues related to severe behavior problems, where do you feel they would best be spent?" Teachers were asked to rank order each of the items from one to five with one being "lowest priority need" to five indicating "highest priority need." The following results (listed in order from lowest to highest priority need) were indicated:

1. Improve university-based preservice training (mean rating = 2.85)
2. Increase number of staff (mean rating = 3.03)
3. Provide more individual consultation from experts (mean rating = 3.15)
4. Increase resources for conducting home interventions (mean rating = 3.25)
5. Improve school-wide inservice training (mean rating = 3.32)

Use and effectiveness of antecedent and consequent behavioral interventions. Teachers were provided a list of 12 antecedent and 23 consequent behavioral interventions and were asked to indicate by circling a corresponding number which they routinely used with students with severe behavior problems. In addition, of those interventions selected, teachers were further requested to rate, on a Likert type scale from 1 to 5 with 1 indicating "not effective" to 5 indicating "very effective," the

interventions that they used. Teachers were asked to follow the same procedures for a list of 23 consequent crisis interventions. Table 7 is arranged in descending order by routine intervention techniques used. In addition, the table contains a frequency count of each technique selected and the average effectiveness for each technique as indicated by participants. The table contains similar data corresponding to consequent crisis interventions (due to the nature and definition of "crisis," no antecedent intervention data was collected).

Table 7: Effectiveness of Antecedent and Consequent Behavioral Interventions

	ROUTINE			CRISIS		
Antecedent Intervention	*Rank*	*Frequency*	*Effective **	*Rank*	*Frequency*	*Effective **
Provide choice	1	752	3.76			
Teach alternative behaviors	2	704	3.68			
Provide variety in instruction	3	699	3.84			
Reduce task demand	4	644	3.63			
Teach communication system	5	564	3.68			
Assess student motivation	6	556	3.68			
Reduce environ. pollutants	7	531	3.68			
Develop school contracts	8	434	3.24			
Conduct functional analyses	9	395	3.43			
Stabilize individual variables	10	386	3.68			
Develop home contracts	11	358	2.87			
Other	12	67	4.01			
Consequent Intervention						
Provide verbal reinforcement	1	771	3.86	5	467	3.64
Provide verbal feedback	2	743	3.57	3	507	3.42
Verbally redirect pupil	3	726	3.46	2	528	3.39
Ignore negative behavior	4	673	2.88	9	349	2.85
Provide tangible reinforce.	5	666	3.97	10	347	3.79
Instructional time-out	6	639	3.52	6	418	3.50
Physical time-out	7	623	3.66	1	548	3.84
Provide verbal reprimand	8	618	2.82	7	388	2.91
Physically redirect pupil	9	610	3.36	4	505	3.53
Loss of privileges	10	602	3.54	8	373	3.59
Provide token reinforcement	11	505	3.63	13	261	3.48
Suspension	12	321	2.62	12	282	2.93
Student self management	13	315	3.08	15	187	3.17
Staff restraint of student	14	276	2.68	11	283	3.35
Detention	15	214	2.60	16	153	2.69
Physical time-out/isolation	16	203	3.08	14	190	3.49
Overcorrection/Restitution	17	190	2.47	18	93	2.51
Allow student to escape task	18	182	2.07	17	135	2.53
Use of prosthetic restraints	19	85	2.12	19	54	2.35
Use of helmets	20	81	2.19	20	51	2.22
Corporal punishment	21	73	1.45	21	42	1.60
Noxious/Toxic mists to face	22	56	1.52	23	27	1.30
Other	23	43	4.05	22	35	4.43

* Effectiveness was ranked on a Likert type scale from 1 to 5 with 1 indicating "not effective" and 5 indicating "very effective."

Teacher recommendations for improving support for students with severe challenging behaviors. One of the final questions on the questionnaire was an open-ended request for recommendations for "improving the ability of teachers and districts to respond to the needs of students with severe challenging behaviors." A total of 915 of the 1,282 teachers responded to this question with 1,568 statements. Many teachers made more than one recommendation. Teacher responses were transcribed verbatim and organized into 17 distinct recommendations.

Table 8 provides a listing of the teacher recommendations and the number of teachers who made each recommendation. The most frequent recommendations were to provide in-service workshops and in-class consultants who directly assist teachers and teaching assistants in the development and implementation of plans to support students with challenging behavior. Generally, emphasis was given to strategies that would improve the competence of the teacher. Recommendations for external assistance from consultants and other multidisciplinary team members stressed the need for hands-on, repeated contact. A third highly rated recommendation was to work with family and others involved with the student.

Table 8
Most Common Recommendations Made by Teachers for Improving Ability of Teachers and Districts to Respond to Needs of Students with Severe Behavior Problems a,b

Ranking	Recommendation Category	Total Teacher Comments
1	In-service workshops	350
2	Consultant support	191
3	Work with family and others involved with the student	156
4	Increase staff-to-student ratio (e.g., additional teaching assistants)	128
5	Clarify procedures and policies	102
6	Decrease class size (e.g., reduce number of students per class)	99
7	Improve/increase preservice training	85
8	Program and curriculum development	80
9	In-service for administrators and general education teachers	76
10	Administrative support/supervisor evaluation of programs	69
11	Increase multidisciplinary team support	68
12	Reallocation of resources	55
13	Change school environment (e.g., add time-out room, isolated work area, etc.)	34
14	Team teaching/collaboration	27
15	Inclusion/integration with nondisabled peers	24
16	Visit effective programs	14
17	Optional placement outside regular school	10

a 915 teachers with 1,568 comments
b From Question 26 of the Statewide Survey of California Teachers About Critical Issues Concerning Special Education.